

PLEASE AMEND THE CLAIMS AS FOLLOWS:

1. A method of forming a bonding pad that is immune to IMD cracking, comprising:
- 5 providing a partially processed semiconductor wafer having all metal levels completed;
- forming a blanket dielectric layer over the uppermost metal level;
- 10 patterning and etching said dielectric layer to form horizontal and vertical arrays of trenches passing through said dielectric layer, such that none of said horizontal trenches completely intersects any of said vertical trenches, and separating said dielectric layer into cells;
- filling said trenches with a conducting material;
- performing CMP;
- depositing bonding metal patterns;
- 15 bonding wires onto said bonding metal patterns;
- forming a passivation layer.

Claim 4 is cancelled.

Claim 5 is cancelled.

8. The method of Claim 1 wherein the filling of said trenches with a
- 20 conducting material is accomplished using a plug process from the set :Al plug, Cu plug, silicide plug.

11. A method of forming a bonding pad that is immune to IMD cracking, comprising:

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- 5 providing a partially processed semiconductor wafer having all metal levels completed;
- forming a blanket dielectric layer over the uppermost metal level;
- patterning and etching said dielectric layer to form horizontal and vertical arrays of trenches passing through said dielectric layer according to a nonintersecting layout;
- filling said trenches with a conducting material;
- performing CMP;
- depositing bonding metal patterns;
- 10 bonding wires onto said bonding metal patterns;
- forming a passivation layer.

Claim 14 is ~~cancelled~~.

Claim 15 is ~~cancelled~~.

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- 15 18. The method of Claim 11 wherein the filling of said trenches with a conducting material is accomplished using a plug process from the set: Al plug, Cu plug, silicide plug.

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- 20 20. The method of claim 11 wherein the separation between neighboring horizontal trenches and neighboring vertical trenches is between about 0.1 and 10 micrometers, and the ratio between the spacing of perpendicular trenches to the spacing of parallel trenches is less than about 1/5, and the spacing of perpendicular trenches is greater than about 0.1 micrometers

21. A method of forming a bonding pad that is immune to IMD cracking,  
comprising:

providing a partially processed semiconductor wafer having all metal  
levels completed;

AS  
5 forming a blanket dielectric layer over the uppermost metal level;  
patterning and etching said dielectric layer to form horizontal and  
vertical arrays of trenches passing through said dielectric layer  
according to a brick laying layout or [the] a modified brick laying  
layout;

10 filling said trenches with a conducting material;  
performing CMP;  
depositing bonding metal patterns;  
bonding wires onto said bonding metal patterns;  
forming a passivation layer.

15 Claim 24 is cancelled.

Claim 25 is cancelled.

AB  
28. The method of Claim 21 wherein the filling of said trenches with a  
conducting material is accomplished using a plug process from the  
set: Al plug, Cu plug, silicide plug.

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#### REMARKS

The examiner is thanked for thoroughly reviewing the subject patent  
application and particularly for pointing out the corrections required. Claims